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C O N T E N T S

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PANAMA: Assessment of canal talks. (Page 5)

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ISRAEL-SYRIA-LEBANON: Israelis attack fedayeen in Syria and Lebanon (Page 14)

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PANAMA: The Torrijos government will permit canal talks to continue in Washington next week, but no break-through is in sight.

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Particular sticking points are continued US jurisdiction over Panamanians in the Zone and a status-of-forces agreement. Panama wants to limit US military activities to direct defense of the canal and insists that any other objectives, such as hemispheric defense, be covered in separate agreements.

Panama is seeking the level of canal revenue it would have received if the 1967 draft treaties had been accepted, and payment for all US bases and for a US option to build a sea-level canal. Panama is pushing for return of all or most of the east bank of the canal and for the return of the canal itself in advance of the 50 years proposed by the US.

Given this divergence in positions and Panama's dissatisfaction with the talks to date, the decision to resume negotiations and to forgo use of heavy-handed pressure tactics reflects more the absence of a consensus than the adoption of a new strategy. Divisions within the government concerning the timing and degree of pressure that should be used against the US, Torrijos' own uncertainty about the concessions that could be squeezed out of the US, and his indecisiveness in identifying to his negotiators the minimum requirements for a new treaty, may have led him to conclude that the best interim tactic would be to continue talking.

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Although this presents the US with an opportunity to introduce new ideas before the Panamanian position becomes totally inflexible, there remains the danger that Torrijos will continue to undercut his own negotiators and succumb to Tack's urging for a showdown with the US.

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NOTES

ISRAEL-SYRIA-LEBANON: Israeli forces this morning hit fedayeen bases in Syria with aircraft and artillery. Terrorist activity along the Israeli-Syrian cease-fire line in the Golan Heights had increased following Israel's punitive strikes into Lebanon. The Israelis are apparently determined to demonstrate that fedayeen activity from Syria is just as unacceptable as that from Lebanon. Meanwhile, along the Lebanese border the Israelis exchanged fire with terrorists who launched Katyusha rockets into a settlement in northern Israel from inside Lebanon.

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